

# Questions and Answers About the California English Language Development Test

---

State law (*Education Code* sections 313 and 60810) and federal law (Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) require that school districts administer a state test of English language proficiency (1) to newly enrolled students whose primary language is not English and (2) to English learners as an annual assessment. For California public school students, this test is the California English Language Development Test (CELDT).

The CELDT (instituted by *Education Code* sections 313 and 60810[d]) has three purposes: (1) to identify students who are limited English proficient; (2) to determine the level of English language proficiency of students who are limited English proficient; and (3) to assess the progress of limited English proficient students in acquiring the skills of listening, reading, speaking, and writing in English. Questions and answers about this important test follow.

## ***Who must take the CELDT?***

*Education Code* Section 52164.1[a] requires all students (in kindergarten through grade twelve) whose primary language is not English, based on the Home Language Survey (HLS), must take the CELDT within 30 calendar days after they are enrolled in a California public school for the first time to determine if they are English learners. When parents or guardians first register their children for school, they complete a HLS that indicates what language is spoken in the home. The CELDT also must be administered once each year to identified English learners until they are reclassified as fluent English proficient (RFEP) based on the criteria for reclassification established by the local school district in accordance with state law. Guidelines for the reclassification of English learners, approved by the State Board of Education (SBE), are provided on pages III-3 through III-5.

In addition, Section 3302 of Title III of NCLB requires school districts receiving Title III funds, not later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year or within two weeks of a student's placement in a language instruction program after the beginning of the school year, to inform parents or guardians of (1) the reasons for their student's identification as an

	English learner and (2) the need for placement in the specified program. Parents or guardians of English learners with an individualized education program (IEP) must be notified how the recommended placement will help their children meet the objectives of the IEP.
<b>Can parents or guardians have their students exempted from taking the CELDT?</b>	No. Federal and state laws require that all students who meet the criteria are to be assessed for English language proficiency, and parents or guardians cannot remove (exempt or opt out) their students from this requirement.
<b>Who is an English learner?</b>	An English learner (also known as a limited English Proficient or LEP student) is a student who does not speak English or whose native language is not English and who is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English (as per <i>Education Code</i> Section 306[a]).
<b>What does the CELDT assess?</b>	<p>Currently, the CELDT assesses listening and speaking for students in kindergarten and grade one. The tests for students in grades two through twelve assess listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The CELDT is aligned to the English Language Development (ELD) standards adopted by the SBE, which are available on the Content Standards Web page at <a href="http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/">http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/</a>. The CELDT domains and test components are as follows:</p> <p><b>Listening</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Strategies and applications</li> </ul> <p><b>Speaking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Strategies and applications</li> </ul> <p><b>Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Word analysis</li> <li>■ Fluency and systematic vocabulary development</li> <li>■ Reading comprehension</li> <li>■ Literary response and analysis</li> </ul> <p><b>Writing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Strategies and applications</li> <li>■ English–language conventions</li> </ul>

**What types of questions are used on the CELDT?**

The following types of questions are used:

**Listening**

- Following oral directions
- Extended listening comprehension (passage)
- Rhyming
- Listening comprehension (short, school situation)

**Speaking**

- Oral vocabulary
- Speech functions
- Choosing and giving reasons
- Four-picture narrative

**Reading**

- Word analysis
- Fluency and systematic vocabulary development
- Reading comprehension
- Literary analysis

**Writing**

- Grammar and structure
- Writing sentences
- Writing a short composition

Released test questions from past CELDT administrations are available on the CELDT Resources Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/resources.asp>.

**Which CELDT tests are the students in kindergarten and grade one required to take?**

In 2008–09, kindergarten and grade one students are being tested on listening and speaking. Title III of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which came after the CELDT was instituted in 1999, requires that English learners in kindergarten through grade twelve throughout the nation be assessed in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

In 2007, California's *Education Code* Section 60810 was amended in order to assess students in kindergarten and grade one in early literacy. The new literacy test will assess reading and writing. Field testing for this test will be conducted in spring 2009 and will become part of the CELDT administration in the 2009–10 school year. Students in kindergarten and grade one then will be tested in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

<b><i>Do English learners with disabilities take the CELDT?</i></b>	Yes. All English learners must take the CELDT, and this includes English learners with disabilities. Students with disabilities who participate in the CELDT may use accommodations, modifications, and/or take alternate assessments as specified in their IEPs or Section 504 Plans. A list of allowable variations, accommodations, and modifications is outlined in <i>Matrix 1. Matrix of Test Variations, Accommodations, and Modifications for Administration of California Statewide Assessments</i> (October 2007), which is available on the CELDT Resources Web page at <a href="http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/resources.asp">http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/resources.asp</a> .
<b><i>Must students keep taking the CELDT annually until they are reclassified as fluent English proficient?</i></b>	Yes. State law requires all English learners to take the CELDT annually until they are reclassified as RFEP based on criteria established by the local school board in accordance with state law.
<b><i>Who decides which test questions will be on the CELDT?</i></b>	All test questions must be aligned to the ELD Standards. A content review committee is convened to review proposed test questions each year. The committee is comprised of educators from a variety of California school districts (including teachers from every grade span), resource teachers, and site and central office administrators. A bias and sensitivity review committee also examines the test questions. This committee is comprised of parents and guardians, community members, and educators representing a variety of languages and cultural backgrounds. Following these reviews, the test questions are presented to the CDE for technical review and approval.
<b><i>Who gives the CELDT?</i></b>	Only test examiners who are employees of the school district, are proficient in English (e.g., have complete command of pronunciation, intonation, and fluency and can correctly pronounce a full range of American English phonemes), and have received training specifically designed to prepare them may administer the CELDT.
<b><i>How long does it take for students to complete the CELDT?</i></b>	The CELDT is an untimed test. The speaking part of the test is administered individually and takes about ten minutes for each student to complete. The listening, reading, and writing parts are administered as a group and take about two hours to complete.
<b><i>When and how do parents or guardians receive their students' CELDT results?</i></b>	School districts must send individual CELDT results to parents or guardians within 30 calendar days after they are received by the school district. It takes an average of eight weeks to score the tests and return results to school districts after they are received by the test contractor.

***How are the CELDT results reported for individual students?***

The 2008–09 CELDT report for each student provides the following:

- An overall English performance level and scale score for all domains of the test combined
- A scale score and a performance level for each domain tested (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)
- A comprehension score that is an average of the scale scores for listening and reading (No performance levels are available for combined scale scores because combined scores are derived from scale scores for which performance levels are provided.)

**Note:** Unlike raw scores, scale scores permit the direct comparison of test results from one administration to another. The relationship between the raw score and scale score reflects the difficulty of individual test questions in each test form and the constant measure of performance indicated by the reported scale scores. The procedure of converting the raw scores to scale scores involves scaling and equating.

***What do the terms “raw score,” “scale score,” “cut point,” and “common scale” mean within the context of reporting the CELDT results?***

For CELDT, a raw score is the number of test questions answered correctly. Raw scores should not be used to compare results from grade to grade or year to year.

Scale scores are derived from raw scores and reported in a specified numerical range. Unlike raw scores, scale scores permit the direct comparison of test results from one administration of a test to another unless there have been changes in the scoring ranges.

A cut point is the scale score needed to reach a specified performance level.

A common scale makes it possible to compare results from grade to grade. In the case of the CELDT, the common scale, established in 2006–07, allows comparison of results for consecutive grades.

***What is the common scale for the CELDT?***

Beginning with the 2006–07 results, the new common scale with updated scale score cut points have been used to determine a student’s performance level. This common scale was designed as part of the CDE’s ongoing effort to improve the reporting of results and increase the

	<p>precision in accountability reporting across grade levels. This allowed for comparisons between the 2006–07 and the 2007–08 CELDT results as well as comparisons to results of the 2008–09 administration and future CELDT editions.</p>
<p><b><i>How are the performance levels for each domain determined?</i></b></p>	<p>The CELDT results for individuals or groups of students show the level of performance students have attained as they progress toward English language proficiency. Each domain tested is assigned a performance level based on the scale score achieved. There are five levels of performance: Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate, Early Advanced, and Advanced. The CELDT results are not used to measure academic achievement.</p>
<p><b><i>How is the overall performance level determined?</i></b></p>	<p>Students in grades two through twelve are assigned a performance level for each domain tested (including comprehension), which is the average of the listening and reading scale scores. The overall scale score is calculated by weighting the domain scale scores as follows: 25 percent for listening, 25 percent for speaking, 25 percent for reading, and 25 percent for writing. In 2008–09, students in kindergarten and grade one only are assigned a performance level for listening and speaking as follows: 50 percent for listening and 50 percent for speaking. The charts on pages II-11 through II-13 show the scale score range for identifying a student's performance level for the domain tested and overall performance level.</p>
<p><b><i>Can CELDT results for 2008–09 be compared with CELDT results of previous years?</i></b></p>	<p>The 2008–09 results may be compared to the 2006–07 and 2007–08 results using the new common scale but should not be compared with earlier CELDT results. However, CELDT results from past years are available on the CELDT Reporting Web page at <a href="http://celdt.cde.ca.gov/">http://celdt.cde.ca.gov/</a>.</p>
<p><b><i>Who sees the CELDT results for individual students?</i></b></p>	<p>Only authorized school district personnel, the student, and parents or guardians see individual students' CELDT results.</p>
<p><b><i>How are results of the CELDT used?</i></b></p>	<p>CELDT results for newly enrolled students are used to initially identify students as English learners who need to develop their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. Results also are used to identify students who are Initial Fluent English Proficient (IFEP). Annual CELDT results are used to see how well English learners are acquiring English and as one of four criteria to determine if they are ready to be reclassified as RFEP as determined by the local school board in accordance with state law.</p>

<b><i>How do school districts use results of the initial CELDT assessment to identify students as English learners or as Initially Fluent English Proficient?</i></b>	The SBE established guidelines, based on CELDT results, to determine English language proficiency. For initial identification, students who score at least at the early advanced performance level overall without any domain below the intermediate performance level on the CELDT may be identified as IFEP. Students who do not meet this criterion should be identified as English learners and take the annual CELDT assessment until they are reclassified as RFEP.
<b><i>How do school districts use CELDT results for reclassifying English learners as fluent English proficient?</i></b>	School districts use individual CELDT results as one of four criteria when considering reclassifying English learners. Additional measures that must be considered are the comparison of the student's performance in basic skills against an empirically established range of performance in basic skills based upon the performance of English proficient students of the same age, teacher evaluation, and parent or guardian opinion and consultation. The <i>Guidelines for Reclassification of English Learners</i> document, approved by the SBE, is on pages III-3 through III-5. Reclassification is a local decision to be established by the local school board in accordance with state law ( <i>Education Code</i> Section 313).
<b><i>How do parents or guardians find out more about the CELDT or their student's results?</i></b>	Parents or guardians should be encouraged to contact their student's teacher and/or the school office. They also may request a conference to review the CELDT results or to attend one of the information meetings scheduled by the school or school district.
<b><i>When and how will summary results be released for the 2008–09 annual CELDT administration?</i></b>	The 2008–09 annual CELDT results for schools, school districts, counties, and the state will be posted on the CELDT Reporting Web page at <a href="http://celdt.cde.ca.gov/">http://celdt.cde.ca.gov/</a> in spring 2009. Results of the initial assessment (administered from July 1, 2008, through June 30, 2009) and the combined initial and annual assessments summary results will be posted in fall 2009.
<b><i>What do the CELDT Internet reports include?</i></b>	The annual 2008–09 summary reports posted on the Internet will show the number of and percentage of students at each grade achieving each of the five performance levels for overall English language performance and for each domain tested. The 2008–09 summary reports also will show the number and percentage of students meeting the CELDT criterion for English language proficiency.

**More Information about the CELDT**

Additional information about the CELDT can be found on the CELDT Resources Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/el/resources.asp> or contact the CELDT Office in the Standards and Assessment Division of the CDE by phone at 916-319-0784, by fax at 916-319-0967, or by e-mail at [CELDT@cde.ca.gov](mailto:CELDT@cde.ca.gov).